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# News Release

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## Mustard breakdown products detected in Spring Valley Lot 18 container

**Baltimore** — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced today that breakdown products of mustard, a chemical warfare agent, were identified during analysis of a container that was recovered Nov. 23 from the dig at Spring Valley's Lot 18. This is the first detection of agent breakdown product since the Lot 18 excavation was re-started in June in the northwestern Washington, D.C., neighborhood. There was no risk to the community during the recovery and removal.

The glass container in which the breakdown products were found is about 4 ½ inches tall and 1 ¾ inches in diameter. It was recovered "intact," which means it was sealed. About 1 ½ ounces of a dark brown liquid filled about one-quarter of the bottle.

Analysis of the liquid by the Army's Edgewood Chemical Biological Center revealed 250 parts per billion of dithiane and 310 parts per billion of thioxane. Both chemicals are breakdown products of mustard, a chemical warfare agent tested by the Army during World War I at the American University Experiment Station. Both have a low toxicity and would not cause adverse effects if someone was exposed, according to experts.

"Even though the quantity we found is relatively small, and the concentration is low, we are letting the public know as part of our commitment to the community to keep them well informed of developments at Spring Valley," project manager Craig Georg said.

An archeologist will examine the bottle to attempt to date and identify it.

Between June 24 and Aug. 9, the excavation team recovered seven "suspect" items — items that could potentially contain chemical warfare agent or breakdown products. All were sent to Edgewood for testing, which cleared them for agent or breakdown products. They have been sent to a commercial lab for further analysis. Since digging resumed for this fiscal year Nov. 15, the team has recovered 12 suspect items. The item containing the mustard breakdown products was one of these. Another item has been cleared by Edgewood. A third was examined by the Army's Technical Escort Unit and cleared. A fourth, containing white phosphorus, was disposed of in accordance with munitions disposal procedures. The Corps is awaiting results on the remaining eight items.

Lot 18 is a debris field that lies between the southwestern edge of the American University campus and homes on Rockwood Parkway. The Corps is in the process of excavating the site as part of its investigation and cleanup of the Spring Valley Formerly Used Defense Site.

